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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION EVO MORALES PRESIDENTIAL
INAUGURATION US-ARGENTINE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP WAYNE
NOMINATION 01/23/06

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Weekend stories cover Bolivian President-elect Evo Morales' inauguration ceremony and the progress of indigenous movements in Latin America; the US attitude toward Morales; the US-Argentine relationship; the possible nomination of US Assistant Secretary Earl Anthony Wayne as the future US ambassador to Benos Aires; the US-Uruguayan free trade deal; the increasing number of Argentine military trained in the US; Iraq's Shiites being confirmed by election results; Iran denouncing as "unacceptable" recent comments by French President Chirac that France could respond with nuclear weapons against any state-sponsored terrorist attack; and the World Bank's announcement that it will "carefully consider" objections to a report on the construction of two pulp mills in Uruguay.

2. OPINION PIECES AND KEY STORIES

- "The silent progress of the indigenous movement in Latin America"

Fernando Halperin, international columnist of daily-of-record "La Nacion," comments (01/21) "Bolivia is just a few hours away from having an indigenous president. For some, what is worrying is not this fact but his affinity with the Cuban and Venezuelan regimes..."

"However, just a few notice that the landslide victory of the socialist candidate is the most recent expression of an increasingly visible phenomenon -the progress made by the indigenous movement in Latin America..."

"... Miguel Bartolome, an Argentine researcher at the National Institute of Anthropology and History of Oaxaca, Mexico, told 'La Nacion' 'The trend in favor of indigenous participation is a Latin American phenomenon. But, the possibility of accessing the presidency through elections is a Bolivian phenomenon.'"

"According to Bartolome, 'The phenomenon is not new, but it has always been denied. It was not a silent process, but silence was imposed on it'... 'We have always considered normal that a minority of 'criollos' should rule an indigenous majority.'"

- "Reservation and pragmatism, the US prescription regarding Morales"

Hugo Alconada Mon, Washington-based correspondent for daily-of-record "La Nacion," writes (01/22) "These days, the USG is assessing its new diplomatic strategy (a more reserved and pragmatic one) toward brand-new Bolivian President Evo Morales and other Latin American leaders.

"A/S Tom Shannon will witness today Morales' inauguration, which is a noteworthy gesture of rapprochement toward a leader who harshly criticized President George W. Bush during his election campaign. Shannon will also hold private meetings with some of the 11 heads of State and representatives of delegations that will also participate in the inauguration ceremony.

"According to Michael Shifter, VP of the Inter American Dialogue, 'Reality should impose itself. The US should at least attempt to establish a dialogue with Bolivia. It is the minimum the US should do. It is both a pragmatic and realistic view.

"... The White House's main challenge regarding Bolivia is whether it is in a position to counteract the financial and political help already promised by Chavez."

- "A gesture of support from Kirchner"

Martin Rodriguez Yebra, on special assignment in La Paz for daily-of-record "La Nacion," writes (01/22) "What matters is the political gesture. President Nestor Kirchner will land in El Alto Airport this

morning and will leave as soon as Evo Morales is sworn in as president of Bolivia...

"Kirchner wanted to give a clear sign of support for the Bolivian leader by simply coming and bringing his ministers with him... It is a similar delegation to the one he called for his recent State visit to Brazil."

- "The new US diplomatic outlook"

Ana Baron, Washington-based correspondent, comments (01/23) "During his inauguration, Evo Morales made some statements which if made during the Cold War could have induced Washington to overthrow him...

"In the name of democracy and anti-Communism, the US not only removed governments but supported the worst dictatorships in our countries. But, what can it do now in view of democratically elected leaders who criticize its policies?

"By stating that the diplomacy implemented during the Cold War should come to an end, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice recommended what she termed 'transformational diplomacy,' which will bring hundreds of diplomats to the Middle East, Africa and Latin America to open more channels of dialogue and interaction with local communities.

"... A/S Shannon is determined to defend US interests through a conciliatory strategy. Before leaving for Bolivia, Shannon said the US is ready to work with Morales, and he praised populist governments because they integrate new sectors of society into politics. The thorniest issues in the US-Bolivian relationship are the future of the gas supply and coca production."

- "The end of apartheid"

Claudio Uriarte, international analyst of left-of-center "Pagina 12," writes (01/22) "... Morales' inauguration was like the end of apartheid.

"... Morales counts on the support of Venezuelan Hugo Chavez on the sensitive hydrocarbon sector.. and during his recent European trip, Morales even showed some signs of a 'Lula-like' discourse by committing to honoring private property and welcoming foreign investment. His interviews with Repsol YPF businessmen were crucial in this regard. And perhaps the resumption of coca-based economy could be, in spite of US sanctions, the incentive Evo needs to finance part of his project."

- "Bolivia and the arrival of a new realistic leader"

Marcelo Cantelmi, international editor of leading "Clarín," comments (01/21) "Morales has been changing his tough election campaign... During his international tour, he sought to increase international bankers and investors' confidence...

"As many of his counterparts that are winning power in the region, Morales knows that the only way to survive is by alleviating inequity, which is the main factor of political and economic instability in Bolivia. If he does not manage to do it, there will be room for no one, not even for multinational corporations. This is the message of his victory... Evo Morales is not a Marxist, but a realistic leader.

"It is not by chance that Washington has now revalued the mediating power of countries or populist governments, which it has pejoratively referred to so far. For Morales it will not be an easy road. He is a non-experienced leader who reached the government strongly supported by excluded sectors, which does not hide its 'pincer' form."

- "Bordon, increasingly further from the US"

Hugo Alconada Mon, Washington-based correspondent for daily-of-record "La Nacion," writes (01/21) "According to Argentine government officials and diplomats,

President Kirchner could replace Argentine Ambassador to the White House Jose Octavio Bordon in the next weeks as part of an official strategy to renew the US-Argentine bilateral relationship.

"... It happened here that Federal Planning Minister Julio De Vido excluded Bordon in negotiations to bring 15 first-level businessmen to Argentina.

"According to rumors in Washington, De Vido, one of President Kirchner's most trusted men, agreed with A/S Tom Shannon during a meeting in Buenos Aires that Hector Timerman, consul to New York, will be the Argentine coordinator of said business tour to Buenos Aires along with US Ambassador to Buenos Aires Lino Gutierrez."

- "Wayne moved on one more step on his road to Buenos Aires"

Hugo Alconada Mon, Washington-based correspondent for daily-of-record "La Nacion," writes (01/21) "The nomination of current US Assistant Secretary for Economic and Business Affairs Earl Anthony Wayne as the new Ambassador to Buenos Aires has received conclusive support.

"According to official and foreign sources of the Republican administration, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice endorsed his nomination and sent it

to President George W. Bush for his final approval... According to a US diplomatic source, 'Rice's signature is powerful to end the selection process and the discussion promoted by an interested source.' 'The president could still reject his name, but he is highly unlikely to do so.'

"... According to US sources, 'Wayne offered the DCM position to an old friend of Argentina, Michael Matera, current chief-of-Staff of the State Department's number two, Robert Zoellick, and Matera is reported to have accepted it.

"... According to an unidentified friend of Wayne, 'the fact that Wayne is recruiting people he trusts shows that his nomination is almost a fact and that the US State Department (career line) defeated the most conservative ones.'"

- "Kirchner shows a more conciliatory attitude toward foreign countries"

Jose Ignacio Lladós, political columnist of daily-of-record "La Nacion," writes (01/23) "... Ever since the visit of A/S Thomas Shannon, (President) Kirchner has conveyed signs to strengthen Mercosur, hinted it is quite 'logical' to pay a higher price for the Bolivian gas supply, said that Lula was one of the 'big presidents in the history of Brazil,' confirmed his commercial rapprochement with Venezuela, said he will reinforce his political ties with Chile, and worked hard to retune the country with the US.

"After months of tension, eleven days of an intense international agenda let him rectify his road and show a different image."

- "Kirchner, between the charrúa fury and the samba's heat"

Fernando Laborda, political columnist of daily-of-record "La Nacion," writes (01/22) "During the last few days, President Nestor Kirchner warned that the dispute with Uruguay due to the pulp mills was more serious than what he thought at the beginning. This is why he tried to downplay the discussion even with the governor of Entre Ríos, Jorge Busti. He termed the problem 'an environmental issue' and publicly supported an eventual Uruguayan decision to reach a free trade deal with the US (no matter if this contradicts Mercosur's protocol).

"... The summit held among Kirchner, Lula and Chavez made progress on the construction of a monumental pipeline that will join part of South America but it also brought doubts over who will finance it.

"Less enthusiasm was raised by Chavez' idea of creating a Bank of the South, which, should be formed through the contribution of half of the international reserves of Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela. A high-ranking source of the Argentine government tactfully said 'Today, we are not evaluating this possibility.' Chavez will have to wait."

- "Brazil downplays a US-Uruguayan free trade deal"

Eleonora Gosman, on special assignment in Brasilia for leading "Clarín," writes (01/21) "One day after the Brasilia summit among Kirchner, Lula and Chavez, there appeared some disagreement between Argentina and Brazil on what strategy to follow with Uruguay in the event Tabaré Vazquez decides to sign a free trade deal with the US.

"Kirchner revealed some degree of political flexibility that does not seem to be 100% shared with the Brazilian government... According to Marco Aurelio Garcia, Lula's presidential advisor on foreign affairs, if Uruguay seeks to intensify its trade with Washington, 'we do agree.' But, 'an eventual free trade deal is something quite different. There are treaties and treaties, and we are worried about it.'"

- "According to a Washington expert, 'The US sees social problems as military ones'

Yolanda Yebra, political columnist of centrist newspaper "Perfil," writes (01/22) "Adam Isacson, expert in defense, security and drug trafficking in Latin America and head of the Center for International Policy Programs, explains the purpose of the US military aid for Argentina and he warns that the US sees social problems from a military point of view.

"... The most important thing for Bush is that those countries receiving aid will respond to his concept of democracy and free market agenda. Also, security is crucial for our administration and the frequent regional instability, added to the fact that we are a bit militarist, makes us see the social problems of the hemisphere from a military perspective."

13. EDITORIALS

- "Search for alternatives in South America"

An editorial in leading "Clarín" reads (01/22) "The region presents a scenario of big movements and realignments, which is a consequence of new political solutions and the search for ways out of old economic problems with the energy issue as a backdrop.

"... While this realignment was taking place, the Uruguayan Government announced its purpose of reaching a free trade deal with the US, which could infringe on the Mercosur agreement.

"Uruguay believes it has received an unfair treatment from its largest partners. It is still unknown whether this announcement is a form of protest to obtain concessions or whether there is a steady purpose to seek a deal with the US and what benefits are expected from it.

"Uruguay's reaction has made it obvious that big partners have not taken into account the situation of those with less economic capability, as did happen in the European integration process. Big partners should review their stance if they decide to maintain Mercosur."

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GUTIERREZ